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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ES](#) [KCRM](#)

SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR: ARRESTS MADE IN ASSASSINATION OF FMLN
MAYOR

11. (U) SUMMARY: The investigation into the January murder of the FMLN mayor of Alegria and a municipal employee was turned on its head when the municipal comptroller and two other city employees were arrested for hiring two hit men to murder the mayor. These arrests refute initial speculation in the case that had thrown suspicion on the former ARENA party mayor of the town and provoked claims by the FMLN and U.S. NGO's of alleged government complicity and cover-up. The police continue to search for identities of the two people accused of being the trigger-men in this case. End Summary.

12. (U) On April 13, the Salvadoran National Civilian Police (PNC) arrested three people in the January murder of Alegria Mayor Moises Funes and his assistant, Zulma Jacqueline Rivera. The alleged mastermind of the assassination, Alegria town comptroller Carolina Isabel Cortez de Villatoro, was arrested along with Marvin Antonio Portillo, a municipal contractor with whom she is alleged to be romantically linked. The PNC also arrested Rigoberto Soriano Cruz, who was with the victims when they were killed and had been a protected witness in the case. The police say that are still trying to establish the identity of the two people who were contracted by Villatoro to actually pull the trigger.

13. (U) Moises Funes, the FMLN major of Alegria, was gunned down on January 9 while traveling with Zulma Jacqueline Rivera, the mayor's assistant and manager of hiring and acquisition for the municipality. The initial investigation did not reveal a motive for the killings, but almost immediately the FMLN and sympathetic U.S. NGO's claimed that the murder was a political killing and accused the former mayor, Carlos Luna, an ARENA party member defeated by Funes in 2006, of involvement. They also alleged that the PNC and the Attorney General's office were purposefully dragging their feet on the investigation.

14. (U) According to police, their investigation revealed that the murder was based on political and professional differences between Funes and Villatoro, centered on Villatoro's desire to run for Mayor in 2009 as the FMLN candidate instead of Funes. Alegria's former mayor, Carlos Luna, who had been repeatedly accused by the FMLN of involvement in the killings, told the Prensa Grafica newspaper that he was satisfied with the police investigation which "proves the hypothesis that we maintained all along." The FMLN has not commented publicly on the recent developments.

15. (U) COMMENT: That the murder of a small town (pop. 14,300) mayor in El Salvador would draw such a high-level of national and international attention is very telling. Politics in El Salvador has always been polarized and is becoming even more so in the run up to the 2009 elections for President, Legislative Assembly, and municipal offices. Events such as this (which did not even involve ARENA) suggest that almost any incident involving the FMLN or ARENA will be used to fan the flames of political tension and suspicion. We expect

political tensions to increase and with them the possibility
of more violence and accompanying media and NGO interest. End
Comment.

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